4: Pierson Z-4,5 (1935-1937) 1967
SOll Bahia Brazillans SOll

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The dances continue unabated for hours, until the air of the *barracão* becomes very warm and permeated with the odor of perspiring bodies. Seriously, with rapt attention, the closely packed crowd looks on, eager to see and hear the numerous *orixás* as they "arrive." During a period of the most intense excitement, when tensions have been built up almost to the breaking-point, a rocket suddenly bursts with a loud report outside the *barracão*. A woman seated among the spectators who is not a *filha de santo* is immediately thrown into violent, convulsive muscular movements and bounces up and down with great force on the board seat, her head snapping back and forth in time to the now almost frenzied beat of the drums. The *pae de santo* rushes to support her in order to prevent imminent injury. Several visiting *filhas de santo* who do not want to dance in this strange place and are consequently "resisting" the imminent "arrival" of their *orixás*, call out with imploring voices, one after the other, "Dê-me agua, por amor de Deus" ("Give me water, for the love of God!"). The face of a servant girl named Joanna, a *filha* from a neighboring *seita*, is drawn, and she appears to be in pain. Afterward, she says that her *orixá*, Xangô, was beating and striking her to make her dance and that she felt more tired than if she had danced all night long. But other spectators remark, "How beautiful! I never saw Ogun dance like that before. And Oxóssi, and Yemanjá, they are wonderful, simply wonderful!"

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The ceiling of another *barracão* (at the *terreiro* called Gantois) is trimmed with paper streamers—red, white, blue, and yellow—each alternating with rows of white paper roses. The electric-light bulb suspended from the ceiling is shaded by red and white pieces of cellophane. On the walls are red and white paper shields, each bearing the words, "Louvores á

4: Pierson Z-4, 5 (1935-1937) 1967
SOll Bahia Brazilians SOll

girl carries in her hand the insignia of Oxun, a *leque* (fan) of brass decorated with a star.

All the other dancers, except one, are dressed in the *bahiana* costume, with wide-flowing skirts of bright-colored cotton prints, blouses trimmed in handmade lace, and a *pano da Costa* two feet in width tied tightly around the small of the back and over the breasts. One woman about thirty-five years of age is dressed in an ordinary street costume of tailored blouse and skirt. Many of the dancers wear bracelets of copper, brass, bronze, lead, or glass beads, often on both wrists and occasionally three to four to the arm. One dancer has five strands of cowries about her neck.

The priestess of the *seita*, Mãe Menininha, is a large black woman, forty-one years of age, who has officiated in this *seita* for twenty-four years. She proudly speaks of herself as "uma neta d'um Africano" ("the granddaughter of an African").

Every dance begins with the salutation of the *mãe de santo*, which is accomplished by striking decisively the *agôgô*. Immediately the drums take up the rhythm. The *filhas* begin to dance, the circle turning like the rim of a wheel, counterclockwise. The women have their hands clasped behind their backs, their shoulders are hunching backward and forward, their bodies bending at the waist from side to side. One of the Oxun initiates moves with a halting, jerking movement, then suddenly pivots a complete turn. All the dancers are singing a refrain which sounds like, "Ô-mi-á, bátû-lê." After some twenty minutes of continuous dancing, one of the *filhas* suddenly becomes "possessed," her eyes close, her expression becomes listless, while her neck and shoulder muscles work convulsively back and forth "in time to the music." Voluntary control is apparently gone,

4: Pierson Z-4, 5 (1935-1937) 1967
SOll Bahia Brazilians SOll

and she is helped around the circle by the next in line. When the music temporarily ceases, she relaxes, staggers, and appears in imminent danger of falling. Several *filhas* rush to catch and support her.

Again the *mãe de santo* strikes the *agôgô*, the leader of the drummers takes up the rhythm and sings out a refrain in which all the dancers join, beating their palms in time with the music. The tempo increases. The dancers as they pass round the circle alternately bow their heads, flex their knees, and touch the right hand to the floor, then snap erect, all in perfect time with the music. An elderly black woman emerges from a connecting-room and, shaking vigorously a *caxixi*, joins in the dance. With loud reports, rockets go off outside the *barracão*. Popcorn is then brought in and thrown over the dancers. The eyes of the initiates, who have also made part of the circle of dancers, are closed and remain closed throughout the ceremony. The shoulders of one *yaô* jerk spasmodically, her head hangs limp and must be supported by other dancers.

Again the circle forms, and the *filhas*, singing at the top of their voices, shuffle forward in a half-stumbling movement, arms flexed at elbows and flapping up and down. An *ogan* says this dance is called *opanigé*. Sometime later, a *filha*, about forty-five years of age, suddenly sprawls stiff-legged on her hands and the tips of her toes, rapidly touches her forehead to the ground in front of the drums and shouts, "Hay-ee-ee," then leaps erect, jerks herself forward spasmodically, then repeats the performance. A girl joins the circle, wearing a pink and gold turban and carrying in her right hand a brass dagger eighteen inches long. Closing her eyes, she begins a wild dance, thrashing about with the dagger to right and to left. The tempo of the

4: Pierson Z-4,5 (1935-1937) 1967
SOll Bahia Brazilians SOll

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786 drums is accelerating. Another *filha*, a large but agile
796 Negro woman, strikes out at the girl with her bare hands,
[635] and the two dance about, fighting a mock fight, while the
[533] beat of the drums becomes even more rapid and tumultuous until, just as the dancers close in upon one another where, it seems, harm might result, other *filhas* swing quickly in, catch each woman around the waist, and draw them apart, while the music slackens its tempo.

[535] All the *filhas* begin to dance again, their arms swinging from side to side, the index finger of the right hand held closely pressing against the thumb of the left. The dancing is very animated. Suddenly, one of the *filhas*, her shoulders heaving violently back and forth, begins to sink upon her knees and, gradually lowering her heaving shoulders to the floor, turns over on her back, all the while keeping the index finger of her right hand firmly in contact with the thumb of her left. She then slowly rises, gets to her feet, and again joins the other *filhas*. An *ogan* says this dance is known as *ecú*.

[787] The dances continue, rockets burst outside, confetti and flower petals are thrown over the initiates, and, at the insistent invocations of the drums and the spirited singing of the *filhas*, many *orixás* "arrive" and "take possession" of their human intermediaries.

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182 The primary social function which the *candomblé* appears to serve is that of reinforcing, by way of the collective experiences of ritual and ceremony, those attitudes and sentiments which distinguish the *Africanos* and their descendants from the European population and from the major portion of the mixed-bloods. By promoting a measure of solidarity and group consciousness, it tends to slow up the process of acculturation. At the same time cult experiences